



CHAPTER 9

ANIMAL WELFARE

9.1. THE FIVE FREEDOMS - NOA ORGANIC STANDARD SECTION 6.2FM	2
9.2. DISEASE PREVENTION	3
9.3. THE THREE SPHERES OF ANIMAL WELFARE	3
9.3.3. PHYSICAL WELL-BEING	3

9.4. HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTION IN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE	5
9.4.1. INTERCONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN HUMANS AND ANIMALS	5
9.4.2. LIVE UP TO THE ORGANIC PRINCIPLES WHEN INTERACTING DIRECTLY WITH	
ANIMALS	6
9.4.3. HOW DO ANIMALS VIEW HUMANS?.....	7

ANIMAL WELFARE



Animal welfare, the state of the animal and the treatment it receives, guided by an attitude of care, responsibility and respect towards livestock, are essential in organic agriculture and expressed through the implementation of high standards. Welfare requires disease prevention, veterinary treatment and appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and slaughter.

Health and vitality and thus resilience and adaptability of an animal depends on the way in which it is kept; an animal which is stressed by a range of adverse conditions will be susceptible to disease and erratic behaviour, "necessitating" the use of allopathic veterinary treatments, including mutilations such as de-horning, to prevent injury.

The results of animal welfare are expressed through longevity, few diseases, displaying normal behaviour and reproducing normally. Our responsibility towards ensuring animal welfare also results in good returns to the

farmer through running a successful and profitable livestock enterprise.

9.1. The Five Freedoms – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2FM

FANMeat describes the Five Freedoms upon which animal welfare is based, reiterated in the NOA Standards:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury or disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

Although international organic standards do not express these as succinctly, organic standards express the same principles.

9.2. Disease prevention

Organic agriculture focusses on prevention rather than cure. This includes the use of well-adapted robust animals which have a good chance of surviving in their environment without high levels of human intervention. For example, a smaller frame animal may be better adapted to a particular farm than a larger animal which may require more food than is available on the farm, necessitating the bringing-in of additional feed and supplements.

Indigenous breeds are generally better suited to local conditions than exotic breeds, although this advantage may be very narrow given the development of exotic breeds to local environments through selective breeding programmes based on the scientific understanding of and working with genetics.

These preventative measures mean that veterinary care plays a secondary role, compared to non-organic intensive systems where it is a primary management function.

The “prevention before curing” steps to be adopted are:

- Keeping robust breeds which are well adapted to the local environment, climate and fodder sources
- Managerial practices which ensure good hygiene, proper diet, sufficient clean fresh water, shelter and space
- Utilisation of treatments based on plants and traditional medicine including homoeopathy
- Implementation of rotational grazing methods to break life cycles of internal and external parasites
- Use of synthetic allopathic medicines in a crisis

9.3. The three spheres of animal welfare

There are three spheres of animal welfare which combine to satisfy the Five Freedoms. These are the physical well-being, nutrition and veterinary care.

9.3.1. Physical well-being

9.3.1.1. Livestock environment – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2a and b

The expression of animals’ “innate behaviour” and satisfaction of their needs are key components of livestock environment. These include access to soil, plants rooted in the soil, sunlight, fresh air, food, grazing, water, shelter, clean sleeping areas including bedding where necessary, the ability to move freely and thus exercise, and keeping them in herds or flocks are all key components. Practices such as permanent tethering are not allowed.

Livestock environment also considers livestock handling facilities which must be safe for both humans and animals alike.

9.3.1.2. Mutilations – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2d and e

Standards permit mutilations such as castration, tail docking, dehorning and legal requirements such as branding. These must be carried out by suitably trained and experienced personnel with minimal stress to the animals. In all instances mutilations must have beneficial results aimed at improving livestock health, welfare and hygiene. Worker safety must also be taken into account.

9.3.1.3. Cleanliness – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2q

Livestock housing, pens, equipment and utensils must be regularly cleaned and sanitised to prevent cross-infection and the

build-up of disease causing organisms. Thus faeces, urine, spoilt bedding and uneaten food must be appropriately managed to minimise odours and the creation of unhygienic conditions, as well as to prevent attracting undesirable insects and animals.

9.3.1.4. Movement of Livestock – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.4FM and 6.4a

Both FANMeat and the organic standards restrict the use of goads to the minimal exceptional use – meaning that they may only be used when absolutely necessary to ensure the welfare and safety of both livestock and their handlers. They may not be used to make the animals move faster just to satisfy the handlers' desires.

FANMeat has specific requirements with regards to moving animals by foot which have been incorporated into the NOA's standards. These depend on the number of days over which the journey is undertaken, the type of livestock and required rest periods. They also specify access to water and feed.

9.3.1.5. Transport and Slaughter – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.4a and b

Animal welfare during transport is of utmost importance, aimed at ensuring their well-being in all ways and at all times. Only healthy animals may be transported, except in the case of veterinary emergencies.

Maintaining the certification integrity of the animals is also essential through proper identification at all times.

Similarly, humane slaughter is essential, keeping stress at a minimum. There is a separate, detailed, chapter on slaughtering in the manual.

Journey times to the abattoir are very important and may not be longer than 8 hours. This may be a challenge for some

Namibian livestock farmers due to the distances that must be covered and the necessity that livestock must be fed certified feed. In these instances farmers should enter into discussions with their certifiers to find a way to overcome limitations while remaining compliant with the standards.

9.3.1.6. Nutrition – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2f

Animals must be fed according to their physiology and not be forced to eat substances that they would not naturally eat, or be fed in quantities that are excessive for their digestive systems. A typical example of this is the feedlotting of ruminants, where their feed consists mainly of grains (concentrates) to the extent that ruminants are fed as if they are monogastric animals. Ruminants require a high proportion of forage in their diet which feeds the microbes in their digestive systems, which in turn feed them. The preferred method of feeding livestock is by "free choice" where the animals are free to choose from a wide range of food that is natural to their diet.

Organic nutrition is aimed at ensuring quality of, and not maximum, production, simultaneously meeting the nutritional requirements of the animals at the particular age and stage of development. Fattening practices are allowed, but must be reversible.

9.3.1.7. Veterinary care– NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2n

Preventative husbandry practices form the basis of sound animal health. This is achieved by using animals which are well adapted to their environment, sound nutrition, low-stress handling and appropriate stocking rate – practices that develop and build immunity resisting disease, infections, parasitic attack and metabolic disorders.

Many health disorders may be corrected through good quality balanced nutrition which

in turn is derived from healthy plants grown on organically well managed healthy living soils.

In this way health care is preventative in nature.

However, the well-being of animals is of paramount importance and sick animals have to receive immediate veterinary treatment, irrespective of the consequence to their certification status.

9.4. Human-animal interactions in organic agriculture

Acknowledgement: This chapter is based on the chapter of the same title found in the Biovision, Kenya website at <http://www.infonet-biovision.org> and is used with permission.

9.4.1. Interconnectedness between humans and animals

There is interconnectedness between humans and animals: we have domesticated them and in doing so have taken them in our care. We use the animals for many purposes. This means that we have the responsibility for them and their well-being. Therefore we need to be conscious of how we as humans regard and treat animals.

It is important to always remember that animals are sentient beings. They have senses and feelings, such as fear, anxiety, restlessness, and they can also be satisfied, content and happy. There is no doubt that our attitude towards animals – the way in which we view them and perceive them as fellow

living beings – affects how we treat them in practice and how we treat each other.

One of Mahatma Gandhi's great quotations is: 'The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated'. This indicates how we are related to animals: we have a moral and ethical obligation to treat animals well – animals are our fellow living beings on this Globe. How do we practice this in organic livestock farming?

The first thing is to realise that respecting the animals and their nature is not only fair towards them, but it is also much easier than trying to work with force and against the animals' nature. Treating animals with care also gives us pleasure and happiness. It is much more satisfying to work with happy animals, which are willing to work, than with animals that are afraid of you and react abruptly and maybe even pose a danger to both you and to themselves because of their fear or anxiety.

Some humans think that it is necessary to treat animals with force in order to make them do what we want them to do, but this is not true. It is necessary to be clear to the animal in terms of what we want them to do, and to be consequent and consistent, but it should always be in a guiding, firm and loving way. If we use force and mistreat them, they become much more scared and resistant to our attempts to make them do what we want them to do. They become much more difficult to work with. This starts a vicious cycle: we become more and more upset with their 'stubborn' behaviour and treat them more and more with force. This creates exactly the reactions from the animals that annoy us and make us treat them with less love and care. We have to break this pattern – it is one cycle that we do not want in organic agriculture!

The discussion below is about the relation between humans and animals when they

interact directly. As humans, we want to be fair to the animals and care for them. Therefore, we also have to be familiar with their needs.

Animal welfare in organic agriculture is about providing the animals with living conditions which allow them to meet their natural needs to the best of our ability, and to intervene immediately if they are not well. This means that we have to organise our farms in ways which allow them to meet their needs and allow us to observe them so that we can intervene when necessary.

9.4.2. Live up to the organic principles when interacting directly with animals

The IFOAM Principles of ecology, care, health and fairness, are our guidelines for the treatment of animals in our daily interaction with them. Many of the recommendations which follow are linked to more than one of the organic principles.

9.4.2.1. Ecology

Familiarise yourself with the animal's nature and allow it opportunities to fulfil its needs. All animals need feed, water, shade, protection against heavy rain, possibilities to rest, to withdraw, and to have a social life in the way its species naturally has a social life. All animal species have their natural needs. All life situations include natural needs, e.g. giving birth requires surroundings which give an animal rest and protection, because in nature they would withdraw when giving birth.

9.4.2.2. Fairness

We need to see life from the animals' perspective, and always only put them in situations which they can handle. Support them when they encounter new things that can scare them.

- All forms of violence towards animals are unacceptable. No beating, no kicking, no hitting, and do not force them to be under very restrictive conditions in small cages or boxes, or with tied legs. If they kick or attack us, it is acceptable to react immediately and in a way closely relating to what the animal just did, e.g. if we shout and give it a clear indication that it just did something which we as humans cannot tolerate. This is very different from unmotivated beating or kicking, or beating and kicking just because we do not understand that the animal reacts because it is scared
- Give animals shelter, shade, access to clean, good quality water and feed, and protect them from predators
- Herd and flock animals which naturally live in groups often have synchronic behaviour. That is: they all want to do the same thing at the same time. Space should allow for this: for example animals must be able to eat at the same time, or lie down together
- Let mothers and their offspring be together as long as possible. Nobody teaches a young animal as well as the parents and adults of the same species
- Let them choose as much as possible in their daily life: where to go, and what to do – allow them free access to areas where they can lie down, to shade, to feed and to water
- Transport animals calmly and be fully aware that this is a very scary situation for them. Be caring also when you load them onto or from a truck, ensuring that they don't fall or get hurt. Take care when travelling that they do not injure themselves

- Take time to let them explore new surroundings when you move them. This makes them much calmer. If you move them in a group, give them time and avoid pushing them too tightly together. If they can see where they walk, they will not injure themselves. Sometimes animals are forced to walk or run in a group so closely packed together that they are forced to lift their heads. This means that they cannot orientate themselves or see where they are going and therefore stumble and fall, injuring their joints and legs. This is particularly important when moving downhill which is uncomfortable for most animals
- Be cautious when moving animals from light into darker areas. They need sufficient time for their eyes and senses to adjust. Likewise they do not like to walk through doors or around sharp corners without first having the opportunity to assure themselves of what lies ahead
- Be fair to draught animals. It is better to split the work into lighter loads which will take more time to complete but will prevent injury and stress
- Slaughter animals humanely. They should be as calm as possible and killed instantly and painlessly
- Be calm, talking to them in any new situation which may cause them stress
- Never shout at animals – it is better to talk to them

9.4.2.3. Health

- Give them optimal conditions in which to stay healthy, supporting them by means of the way you take care of them on an everyday basis

- Equip draught animals with well-fitting and maintained harnesses and ensure that the load is matched to the size of the animal. Take care that they don't get injured or start swelling as a result of their work
- Do treat them with medicine when they are ill and support the healing process by giving them care, rest and good living conditions

9.4.2.4. Care

Get to know them so that you will be able to see if and when their behaviour changes and in turn take appropriate action.

- Read them: which signals they give, and respond to what you see
- Think of them as sentient beings, and know that they can suffer, feel pain, frustration and pleasure – and give them good opportunities to feel the latter

In short, give the animals a life which is worth living, seen from an animal's perspective.

9.4.3. How do animals view humans?

Animals perceive humans in five main ways:

- As a danger. This is due to little or no contact, or to negative and inconsistent contact with humans
- As an enemy, asking too much from the animal, or being too fast or too impatient
- As an indifferent object: humans are 'just there'
- As a provider of food and water
- As a social partner

In organic farming, when we want to live up to the principles of care and fairness, we

should treat animals in ways that lead them to perceive us as provider of feed and water, and definitely not as a 'danger'.

9.4.3.1. Learn about the animals and their nature

It requires dedicated knowledge to treat animals well and in ways which are respectful towards them and their nature. You will gain knowledge and experience through your daily interaction with animals as well as through observing other people and how they work with their animals. Attending courses on "*Low Stress Livestock Handling*" will be of great benefit to you.

9.4.3.2. Teach your children about good animal welfare and care

Children often connect well with animals, especially the young ones. They are great at taking care of animals, when they are guided and taught about what is good for the animal, and clearly told what is unacceptable.

Involve children when you interact with animals, when it is appropriate and safe to do so.

Give children responsibilities and tasks which they can handle in relation to animals. Always keep an eye on them to see whether they follow guidelines, and correct them to guide them in doing it right.

Teach children that careful and loving behaviour towards an animal creates a relationship that can be a pleasure for the animal – which becomes calm and trustful – as well as for the person.

Remember: *It requires knowledge of and experience with animals to treat them well in ways that respect them and their nature.*